

Times Shadow: Volume 0

by

Indana Simonde

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Prologue

Silence composed the street, yet it was not a silence that was natural or calming but rather eerie and cold, distant and devoid of the normality of the hustle and bustle of streets, offices, homes and ultimately life. Litter and old newspapers lay strewn across the ground, along with the remnants of civilisation, yet there was not a single sound to be heard.

There was little to no movement as the machines motioned ever forwards in their destructive nature having been placed on a divergent path from their initial remit to protect and cure humanity of the sickness that had blighted human progression over the last few turbulent years.

The Field Emitters would hold, but only for a number of hours before the usual diagnostic cycle began over the course of picoseconds allowing for the Flood to take hold of the minds of the last inhabitant of the planet if only for a nanosecond, which of course usually led to a series of macabre

scenes in their minds as the transformation process that was almost completely incurable began to take hold and then was reversed in the remainder of what was left of the human race. The planet had come to a standstill as a result of the infection of the planet through the introduction of the Obsidian 21-24 inoculations which, as all of the planet had learnt, lead to side effects that could not be predicted. There were no longer any scientists who could study and reverse the process, hence civilisation was now doomed to a fate distant from any form of normality.

The sun's rays caught her eye's for all of a second as she looked at the light reflected from a nearby tower block; the light being the only thing that stopped the creatures, hence the need for a perimeter composed of light of all colours and kinds. It was actually a twelve year old girl by the name of Irene Hess who had figured out that the light was what was causing people to change due to an issue with the inoculations and the increased radiation from the sun causing a form of dissonance during the day and at night, the creatures. By the time people started mass manufacturing

the Field Emitters, also referred to as *the heartbeat of light*, it was too late, the outbreak had already taken a hold of the planet. The world would never recover, not in this version of the multiverse, though there was always hope of escape or a troop ship that might allow for the evacuation of survivors. But being twelve years old, Irene was alone on this planet with a Field Emitter attached to her jacket's outer pocket such that wherever she walked, night or day, she would be safe.

She had witnessed the Flood become her mother, having cried as her mother screamed for her to find a safe hiding place as the outbreak was taking hold of all sentient life on the planet. Remembering how she had run amidst the panic to the nearest cupboard in her bedroom; she shivered as the memory of her mother disappeared prior to the initialisation of the Field Emitters, making a path for her to make her way through the *monsters* which later became known as the Flood, for the nature of multitude of the creatures. That is to say, they were everywhere and had wiped out humanity on

the planet. Her arm recoiled as she stretched it out towards the light and for a moment, something protruded through the field of light. If Irene couldn't get off the planet, this would be the end of the Human Race as it had once existed.

The Biomechanical soldiers that had once lined street after street adorned in metal and using weapons like laser torches of varying colours that fired electromagnetic waves with photons as a side effect, rather than bullets, were now a curious oddity, most of the battalions having been overrun with the Flood. As Irene walked, she stumbled across a weapon that told a story. After all, she was far from a soldier, just a survivor.

Chapter 1

“No, what we have to do is head south towards the Highlands there will be less population there and as a result we can maintain a level of security of any given perimeter. There are only a handful of us left here and we can’t allow ourselves to forget how far we have come in that amount of time..” Commander Lewis’ voice was stern and all knowing but somehow frail as though he were nervous as it trailed off into the ether. The lack of argument from most of the others cemented the thought in his mind that the dystopic view from far above the city would be their salvation, they had to keep moving. “The army is bound to have gotten to grips with..” Irene’s voice was cut short. Her positive mental attitude was all becoming, but even with the belief that there was anyone left to help, they were not coming for them. “Where is the doctor?” he shouted for Dr Carlyle who had been sitting silently watching the proceedings with his back to the wall as he always sat. The flood could run

around corners but they couldn't simply run through walls, though it wouldn't stop them trying.

“Commander, we have an issue.” Dr Carlyle looked towards his watch; it was two o'clock and there was still nothing on the radio which he had been tinkering with, switching between different channels and frequencies as he had been instructed to. The three of them looked at each other and then the commander attempted to ascertain the situation without saying anything. He gestured with his head for the doctor to proceed with his report.

All three of them knew that despite their surroundings, they were less than likely to survive the month without further supplies, and were less likely to survive the journey to the Highlands without support; though they each hoped for something that could never be. Fate having played it's final string in a manner with which none of them could have predicted despite the hours of training and years of experience, all of course save for Irene who had never seen the inside of a military facility, let alone having had official weapons training with an experienced

commanding officer. As the doctor and the commander began to argue about the best course of action, Irene motioned towards the mirror and looked at her reflection for the first time in near on a week. The three of them had been running from a patrol of machines that had been encircling them as though they were already infected with the Obsidian virus which had manifested itself in the form of the Flood. Little did they know the ramifications of this seemingly once simple outbreak to history or the nature of the role of their own lives in the salvation of the human race.

As Irene looked at her reflection, something curious happened amidst the raised voices of the other two. First she noticed that a cupboard door had been left ajar, then she began to rifle through the cupboard only to find someone was there. A young boy who had likely been left as she was, alone and scared.

“Commander..” her voice trailed off amidst the dust and detritus of the surrounding environment.

“Commander!” she resumed but as she looked around, she found that the Field Emitters had been activated; the Flood were coming, drawing ever closer as the four humans left on the planet began to realise their place in the grand scheme of things. “..well, why don’t you lock the intensity and set up..” his voice slowed to a meandering halt.

“Get away from him!” the Doctor shouted grabbing Irene by the hand as though to lead her away to safety though she resisted.

“He’s human..” she protested, her mothering instincts taking hold of her for all of a second and then as she moved away from him after looking deep into his eyes, she realised that she had made a mistake. Luckily for her, the commander, who always had his weapons around his neck or on his person raised the hilt of a light emitting pistol. The sound of the Flood in the child was one not of the usual sound of laughter, joy or the frustration of childhood, but rather sounded like an army writhing in agony emanated from the child’s body, emitted at volume. The field emitters should have scared the child away, but

somehow he had not been deterred from their position and there was no way with which they could tell the reason why, perhaps the genome of the child was being altered by the virus in such a manner as to allow for the Flood to remain dormant as they shone their torch pistols at him. He simply stood saying nothing.

“What do we do with him?” Irene asked as he attempted to walk towards her.

“Can you speak?” Lewis screeched at the boy as the child looked at them blankly. He darted his eyes from the ornate chaise-longue where the bomb lay and then back at the child. The timer was still set at three minutes but had not been activated.

“What do we do?” Doctor Carlyle who had been standing with his weapon drawn screeched highly aware of the fact that there was a growing shroud to the light as the darkness that always followed the Flood drew ever closer to their position from his view by the window.

“Give me a second!” Lewis ordered and then as quickly as he had allowed the words to pour out of his mind, the front door slammed

open as the room grew increasingly cold like the atmosphere was being drawn from it through the draft. The room was instantly basked in light and the danger that they had avoided for so long began to take hold of the room as they each aimed and fired their weapons, causing streams of light to bask the room with a glow. From a distance, it seemed as though there might be the remnants of a disco or some sort of concert as the cacophony of light and sound almost resembled music. The Flood were not attacking as they normally did, but were more ferocious and angered than they had been in previous iterations of the same situation. The screams that ensued, orders and composition of weapons discharge led Irene to believe that they were not going to make it out of there alive; despite this fact, and the fact that the Doctor and the Commander were fighting a nemesis greater than any other Irene kept her weapon trained on the boy who had stopped making noise and was now entranced with the lights and the sounds of the Flood being vanquished.

It was strange, he seemed to be in limbo as though he had not had all the inoculations and as a result had not fully succumbed to the Flood virus. He was half human and half Flood but was fully able to control his body and as a result he simply looked around him and stood calmly and quietly whilst all around him turned from relative peace to a scene of destruction and misery. The light and the air had a dangerously violent red reaction with the Flood virus and as a result caused all bar the rags they wore to be vaporised in the blink of an eye as the chain reaction that had worn them down time and again was violently triggered within their bodies. One after another of the Flood jumped from awkwardly dangerous positions, such as the tall ceilings of the expansive room they found themselves in, with it's ornate and intricate artwork and seating that could hold a lot of people. The truth was, the old theatre was the perfect place to fight these creatures with their vantage point on the stage close to the admixture of lighting and sound control desks. They played music to distract the creatures from the reality they all were

facing, that is to say, as the sound of music was played, the creatures grew confused along with blinded and eventually vanquished as a result of the light, but this situation could not be sustained indefinitely. It was then that the machine patrol that had been searching for them arrived.

“Switch to manual..” Commander Lewis screamed towards Irene’s position. Irene who was approximately two steps ahead of the Commander’s position found she had barely enough time to slide across the stage, flick a switch on the battery system they had set up that allowed the proximity weaponry to activate, seeking out and deactivating their core power units. The entire battalion was rendered null in the blink of an eye.

Chapter 2

The two ships, the Golden Phoenix and the Golden Eagle hovered close to the ground as they prepared to land on the ground close to one another in a clear and uninhabited landing site that was marked out for transportation and troop vessels. The Wardogs imperative had been activated a long time ago. This basically meant that all available resources that could be spared would be directed towards the signal point, but as the marines arrived steadily working towards their point of departure from the ships that would remain in orbit until they were sent in with orders to evacuate survivors. Some of the marines who had no call signs and were all of equal rank were not a normal detachment of soldiers.

Their uniforms held the insignia of a ship that was highly secretive, their commanding officer, Captain Charlotte Lord had been through hell battling through space, trapped

on asteroids and equally space stations; each of the Daedalus Bases having been obliterated. It was a chance meeting on the outskirts of the solar system after she had given up hope of finding any of her crew members that led her to her current situation with a full complement of marines incidentally.

“Lets make this clean and quick!” she remarked unaware as to the danger that was lurking within the area as they set up a perimeter of lights and weapons. Soldiers with boxes and crates of supplies and equipment, weapons and lights were preparing to fight their now mortal sworn enemy, the Flood with the help of an advanced computer operating system of which each of them had been equipped with their own personal communications system so that they were linked through mental synapses down to the very ocular implants they wore.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, your attention is requested.” the Captain began.

“Codename Wardogs has been activated in this sector, we have a briefing and intel

coming in from the northernmost point in the city. Whilst all seems quiet here, I get the strange feeling we're gonna have to light it up. We have two to three hours and then the Phoenix and the Eagle will likely return with bombers. We have until then to get any survivors in this sector off the ground, and scanners detected three survivors nearby and many more underground." her voice seemed confident and clear but it was evident that there was something that she wasn't telling the marines.

"Our secondary point of departure is the signal emission point of highest intensity, you are all aware that as the Wardogs jump from sector to sector your role will be to keep them from deviating from their course otherwise this war is sunk. The physics for the Wardogs is experimental as you should all have read the brief aboard the Phoenix and the Eagle. They are the primary's and leads in this mission. Need I remind you that where they are to fail, this planet will remain under the control of the enemy. There is no room for deviation." Captain Lord's voice echoed throughout the makeshift landing pad. As

many of the marines shuffled here and there, busying themselves with multiple tasks from setting up an evacuation point that was clear and easy to protect, a group of the marines ran towards the point where the Captain was addressing a large contingent of marines. They each knew that the solar system and ultimately the universe was falling under the hands of the enemy, and without having addressed their enemy, they each knew what was at stake.

It would take a hike through the woods of this world that no longer seemed like home, a journey through the city and then on to the theatre in the first instance, then on to the underground base and then back towards the landing point with a view to evacuating the survivors. Why the Wardogs hadn't been sent in to collect Commander Lewis who had first hand intelligence with regards to the nature of the infestation that had taken a hold of the planet or Doctor Carlyle who had been experimenting on ways with which to stem the virus and ultimately on a cure for it was down to the nature of the tacticians who had initially designed and then implemented the

Codename Wardogs initiative. Captain Lords words had become end all and be all in the interests of saving lives and as she appeared to be the senior most officer amongst the soldiers, she was now in charge of the evacuation procedure.

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